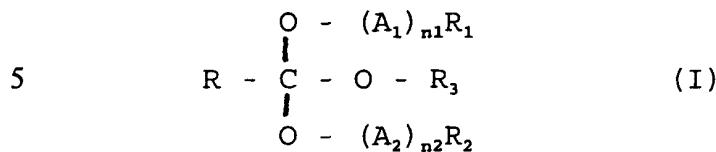


We claim:

1. An ortho ester surfactant of the formula



where R is hydrogen or an aliphatic group with 1-7 carbon atoms;  $\text{R}_1$  is hydrogen or an alkyl group with 1-5 carbon atoms;  $\text{A}_1$  is an alkyleneoxy group with 2-4 carbon atoms, the number of ethyleneoxy groups being at least 50% of the total number of alkyleneoxy groups;  $n_1$  is a number between 1 and 30;  $\text{R}_2$  is an aliphatic group with 5-22 carbon atoms;  $\text{A}_2$  is an alkyleneoxy group with 3-4 carbon atoms;  $n_2$  is a number between 0-30, provided that when  $\text{R}_2$  is an aliphatic group with 5-6 carbon atoms  $n_2$  is at least 1;  $\text{R}_3$  is selected from the group consisting of  $(\text{A}_1)_{n_1} \text{R}_1$ ,  $(\text{A}_2)_{n_2} \text{R}_2$  and an alkyl group with 1-6 carbon atoms, where  $\text{A}_1$ ,  $n_1$ ,  $\text{R}_1$ ,  $\text{A}_2$ ,  $n_2$  and  $\text{R}_2$  have the same meaning as mentioned above; or a di- or poly-condensate via any of the free hydroxy groups of the ortho ester.

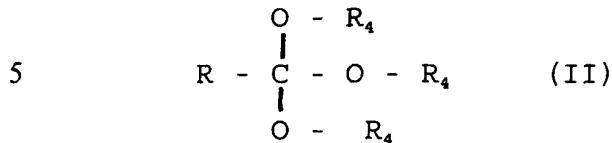
2. The ortho ester surfactant of claim 1, wherein  $\text{R}_1$  is an alkyl group with 1-4 carbon atoms.

25 3. The ortho ester surfactant of claim 1 wherein  $n_1$  is a number between 2-25 and  $n_2$  is a number between 0-20.

4. The ortho ester surfactant of claim 1 wherein  $n_2$  is 0,  $\text{R}_2$  is an aliphatic group with 8-22 carbon atoms and  $\text{A}_1$  is an ethyleneoxy group.

30 5. A process for the preparation of the ortho ester

surfactant of claims 1 which comprises reacting an ortho ester of the general formula



where R is hydrogen or an aliphatic group with 1-7 carbon atoms and  $\text{R}_4$  is an alkyl group with 1-6 carbon atoms, in one or several steps, with reactants having the formulas

10  $\text{HO}(\text{A}_1)_{n_1}\text{R}_1$  and  $\text{HO}(\text{A}_2)_{n_2}\text{R}_2$ , wherein  $\text{R}_1$  is hydrogen or an alkyl group with 1-5 carbon atoms;  $\text{R}_2$  is an aliphatic group with 5-22 carbon atoms;  $\text{A}_2$  is an alkyleneoxy group with 3-4 carbon atoms;  $\text{A}_1$  is an alkyleneoxy group with 2-4 carbon atoms, the number of ethyleneoxy groups being at least 50% of the total 15 number of alkyleneoxy groups;  $n_1$  is a number between 1 and 30; and  $n_2$  is a number between 0-30, provided that when  $\text{R}_2$  is an aliphatic group with 5-6 carbon atoms  $n_2$  is at least 1, while evaporating alcohols with the formula  $\text{R}_4\text{OH}$ , where  $\text{R}_4$  has the same meaning as above.

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6. An emulsifying agent which comprises at least one ortho ester of claims 1.

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7. A dispersing agent which comprises at least one ortho ester of claims 1.

8. A cleaning or scouring composition which comprises the ortho ester of claim 1.

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9. A method of separating a hydrophobic component from an aqueous system which comprises

a) emulsifying or dispersing said hydrophobic component in said aqueous system at a pH of 6 or above in the

presence of an ortho ester in accordance with claim 1,

5 b) lowering the pH or increasing the temperature of the emulsion or dispersion resulting from step a), or a combination thereof, and thereby breaking the emulsion or dispersion, and

c) separating the hydrophobic component from the aqueous system.

10 10. The method of claim 9 wherein the temperature in step b is raised to between 20 and 60°C.

15 11. The method of claim 9 wherein the pH in step b is between 4 and 6.

12. A dyeing or deinking process which comprises the use of at least one ortho ester of claim 1.

20 13. A pesticidal formulation which comprises at least one ortho ester of claim 1.